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Alton Lemon - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Lemon described his philosophy as, "ethical humanism"—reliance on reason in conducting human affairs.^[5] He received the "First Amendment Hero" award in 2003 from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which also recognized him as an "honorary officer".^{[4][6]} In 2004 he stated, "At this point in my life I seriously wonder why we have religion. I am not so sure it does more good than harm. I think that the battle for church-state separation has to be a continuing fight."^[7]

Lemon v. Kurtzman

Exhibit 94

Lemon was the named lead plaintiff in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* a 1971 case in which the US Supreme Court ruled that a Pennsylvania law allowing public tax funds to be paid to religious schools violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.^[8] It is one of the most highly cited Supreme Court decisions.^{[5][9]} The decision established the *Lemon Test* a three-pronged evaluation of legislation related to religion.^{[8][10]} The *Lemon Test* has been applied in Supreme Court cases involving prayer at graduations and other school functions, public displays of religious symbols and the notable case on teaching intelligent design in schools, *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*.^[11]

Lemon was asked to join the case after criticizing the Pennsylvania law at a Philadelphia meeting of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).^{[1][12]} Lemon had standing as a tax-paying citizen of Pennsylvania with a child attending public school there.^[13] Newspapers in Philadelphia called Lemon a "First Amendment hero" at the time of case for volunteering to be a named plaintiff.^[2] Lemon expressed surprise at having a leading piece of First Amendment jurisprudence bear his name.^[1] In 2003 he said, "I still don't know why my name came out first on this case."^[5] Law professor Douglas Laycock offers the explanation that choosing an African American was related to the background of a push back against school desegregation at the time.^{[1][14]} Thirty years after the decision Lemon was displeased at the erosion of the precedent stating, "separation of church and state is gradually losing ground, I regret to say."^{[1][5]} While he never sought public recognition for his involvement with the Supreme Court case, in 2004 he expressed satisfaction with the decision and pride in his participation.^[7]

Death

Lemon died of Alzheimer's disease on May 4, 2013 in Rydal Park, near Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.^[2] He donated his body to science.^[2]

See also

- Ethical movement
- Humanism

References

1. Liptak, Adam (2013-05-26). "Alton T. Lemon, civil rights activist, dies at 84"

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/27/us/alton-t-lemon-civil-rights-activist-dies-at-84.html?smid=pl-share>). *The*

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alton_Lemon